

## [Tia Lupe]

Mar 22 [?]

"TIA LUPE"

Strolling aimlessly through the almost deserted streets of the little village of Cordova, one afternoon, I stopped in the open doorway of "Tia Lupe's" one room adobe home. There was a storm coming up, one of those some times violent electrical mountain storms following on a spell of hot weather.

I was shocked and surprised to see this pious old lady engaged in a sacrilegious act so contrary to my knowledge of her simple and sincere love and veneration for the saints. With a very blunt butcher knife she was endeavoring to slice a portion, lengthwise, from the side of a bulte or wooden figure of Santa Barbara. This battered figure showed signs of previous [?] of like nature and a rich resinous odor was released in the little room by this resent operation, which had been successfully concluded before I had gotten over my surprise.

Guadalupe Martines of "Tia Lupe" as she was known to everybody in Cordova, after a few years of service in the households of "[?]" in Santa [?] retired to her almost cell-like room in this little town. Here she lived a simple and pious life helping her neighbors in their many homely tasks in return for gifts of food and wood. One of her duties, because of the proximity of her house to the church, was the care of keys to the church. After the monthly visit of the priest from Santa Cruz and after other services held there, her's was the self-appointed task of cleaning and dusting the church. Her attitude towards the figures of different saints in their "niches" and around the altar, was one of reverent and understanding companionship. While arranging their tunics and adornments she would audibly admire the new attire of one, address a supplication to another in behalf of some

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one in the village, and with another saint she might even advance a tentative bargain of a pair of candles or a new dress in return for some small favor.

So with a surprised "Que tiene Tia" "What are you doing with poor Santa Barbara. She will punish you for mal-treating her so." "No hijo" Come in and I will show you what I am doing." As I stepped in through the door the storm broke outside and a flash of lightning lit up the little room. "Maria Santissima y Santa Barbara Nos libgre" was Tia Lupe's audible prayer. "See now I will protect my little "casita" and all in it from the lightning." So saying the old lady stepped over and placed the sliver of wood from the saints figure in the fireplace. The bed of coals already there ignited the rich pitch pine sliver making a bright [if?] little blaze. Making the sign of the cross while her lips moved in a silent prayer Tia Lupe next seated herself on a wooden bench in the fire-side corner. After she had rolled a corn-husk cigarette she made the following observations. "Santa Barbara should be prayed to in time of storms but in the way I have shown you she is more sure protection. For many years I guarded myself and "casita" in time of storms in the way I have shown you. "When padre Ramon told me to remove santa Barbara form the alter to make way for a new santa given by Don Matias, I brought her home. I told Santa Barbara how I was going to use her and ever since she has been my sure protection." So that was the explanation I received for that seeming irreverent treatment of the saints image.

"But don't the saints punish us some times?" I asked wishing to hear the other side of this interesting question. "The blessed saints do punish as well as protect so we must be careful how we speak of them and treat them" was my answer from this interesting character.

Continuing after a short pause during which she chuckled to herself, her wrinkled face lighting up with a smile.

Did I ever tell you about the [???] and the [?] saints or bultos"?

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After I had denied recollection of the tale and had expressed a desire to hear it, she related the following humorous incident.

"You know "[Shen?]" ([incarnacion?]) [?] father was a santero ( maker of saints), and one day when I was helping his wife grind cornmeal, Manuel had just finished two large "bultos". I do not remember who they were, but he had stood them in the sun to dry, just outside his door. Shortly after two "borrachos" both dead now, "[????]" (may they rest in peace) came by. They were arm in arm, "haciendo des veredas" trying to follow two trails, is staggering).

"One of them saw the "bultos" and half surprised said; "Mira que quantos tan [endemonia?] de grandes" (Look what demoniacally large saints.)

"His companion looked over and said; "Calla, que no sabes que los santos son el diablo para castigar?" (Hush, don't you know that the saints are the very devil [?] to punish one.)

Greatly amused by the tale I left Tia Lupe's fire-side knowing that I would return often to listen to her very amusing and interesting conversation.

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